

COMMUNISTS AND RELIGION

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Front of Friendship -- Background of Persecution

In the Communist World today there are millions of people who are treated as second-class citizens merely because they believe in the tenets of the several national branches of the Orthodox Church, the Roman and Eastern Catholic Churches, the Western-oriented denominations of Protestantism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. The campaign against religion is nothing new, but it has had a number of peak periods as well as some periods when it was relatively quiescent (for example, when Stalin sought the support of believers during World War II). Three quotations suffice to illustrate the attention paid to this subject over the years:

1905

"Religion is the opium of the people. Religion is a kind of spiritual vodka in which the slaves of capital drown their human shape and their claims to any decent human life." -- Lenin, "Socialism and Religion"

1933

"The Party cannot be neutral toward religious prejudices, and it will continue to carry on propaganda against these prejudices because this is one

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of the best means of undermining the influence of the reactionary clergy who support the exploiting classes and who preach submission to these classes." -- Stalin, "Leninism"

1964

"The question of the struggle against religion is now perhaps no longer so much a question of science as a question of propaganda of the successes which have already been achieved by science and broad dissemination of scientific atheistic knowledge among the masses." -- Kommunist (theoretical organ of the CPSU Central Committee)

The latest antireligious campaign directed against believers in the USSR was heralded in the January 1964 issue of Kommunist (see quotation above) with an authoritative article by CPSU Propaganda Chief Leonid Ilyichev. It was followed on 2 March that year by a basic decree of the CPSU Central Committee outlined in a Pravda editorial which stressed the absolute necessity of "creating an appropriate system of education in scientific atheism which would embrace all age groups and strata of the population and prevent the propagation of religious ideas, especially among children."

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In regard to the second facet of the current Communist maneuvers, that of courting religious groups in non-Communist countries, perhaps the most telling admission of its duplicity can be found in Vol. III of The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (p. 155):

"Communists may form an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal united front for political action with certain idealists and even with religious followers, but we can never approve of their idealism or religious doctrines."

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[redacted] two clippings from the New York Times of 18 July 1966 [redacted] tell of Communists in both Poland and Italy erecting monuments honoring the late Pope John XXIII. These are transparent maneuvers by the Communists, attempting to pose as sincere supporters of an entente with the Catholics, and have been rightly denounced by the Catholic hierarchy in the two countries. The monuments have a secondary objective which is less commonly recognized: they represent an effort to promote splits among the Catholics by lauding the "peace-loving" Pope John in supposed contradistinction to Catholics who are opposed to any accommodation with the Communists. (This is similar to the familiar Communist tactic of praising dead U.S. Presidents such as Lincoln, Roosevelt and Kennedy, while slandering the President in office.)

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